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STAT

W I T H . C I A R E G R E T S

Can the CIA be fined? It can, it seems. Recently Federal Judge Jack B. Weinstein ordered the CIA to pay out \$1,000 in damages, plus court costs, to three U.S. citizens whose mail its agents had unlawfully opened. The Department of Justice compiled a public apology saying: "The purpose of this letter is to extend to you the sincerest regrets of the United States government for any harm you may have experienced as a result of the interference with your mail." The Voice of America touted in Russian this expression of "genuine, American, democracy."

All that remains is to tot up the total damages the CIA should pay on the basis of such "rates." For according to the Church Committee report "Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans," the CIA illicitly opened and photographed a quarter-million private letters, and used the material

thus obtained to place one and a half million citizens on file.

But the CIA has no intention of surrendering its freedom to encroach upon civil rights. True, now and again a gesture is made "to the gallery," like Federal Judge Weinstein's above-mentioned ruling. Yet there are still at least another 249,997 U.S. citizens into whose private lives the CIA so brazenly intruded.

The First and Fourth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution guarantee citizens the right of the freedom of speech, press, assembly and association and freedom from unreasonable searches of their person, house, papers and effects. This of course means nothing for the CIA and the FBI. The U.S.A.'s much-vaunted "democracy" can only accept the regrets extended.

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